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Is the library doing as much as it might to be a true university to the people?

What do you consider the most valuable accomplishment of the public library movement in the past decade?

Need librarians apologize for circulating a large percentage of contemporary fiction?

New York, April 7, 1913.

Dear Mr. President:

You ask "what do you consider the most valuable accomplishment of the public library movement in the past decade?"

Answer—

The spread of the truth that the public library, free to all the people, gives nothing for nothing; that the reader must himself climb the ladder and in climbing gain knowledge how to live this life well.

ANDREW CARNEGIE.

Cornwall-on-Hudson, N. Y.,

April 11, 1913.

My father* has asked me to write to you in reply to your letter concerning the conference of the American Library Association to be held in Kaaterskill, N. Y. Neither my father nor I have any chance to see in any detail what our public libraries are doing to make like more abundant. One little incident, however, has come within my experience. The New York Public Library sends its discarded books to various hospitals and camps instead of destroying them. I have been able to get some of these discarded books for use in a Boys' Club here in Cornwall. They were well chosen for what I wanted and the boys have been responsive and interested in taking them out. This is simply one of the things that the public libraries are doing with the books they are through with and can use no more.

Yours very truly,

BEATRICE VAIL ABBOTT.

London, England,

April 15, 1913.

In reply to your letter of April 1st, written on behalf of the American Library Association, I do consider that to a certain extent the fiction circulated in the public libraries of the United States does help to enlighten the people on social and economic problems. But I am bound to say that I think that we novelists might do a very great deal more in this direction if

we would avoid sentimentalizing the truth in order to make it seem more palatable, and also if we would adopt the habit of describing more completely the general social background against which our leading figures live and move.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

ARNOLD BENNETT.

Drama League of America,

Chicago, Ill.

In the last three years the American people as a whole have begun to awaken to a realization of the vast importance of our amusements in the nation's life. We are realizing that we are far behind the other civilized countries in the development of our dramatic taste, and we are beginning to be uneasy over the danger of being too careless in regard to our recreation. The people at large are commencing to take a genuine interest in the problems presented by our theater, and the character of the plays they give.

We have arrived at a period of prosperity when we have time, at last, to pay attention to the arts, and especially the last to be developed, the dramatic art. We are uneasy over the conditions in our theaters today.

Vaguely the people as a whole are feeling around for one means or another to correct these conditions, to create a great national art and to restore drama to her proper place among the arts. One movement after another has aimed to meet these conditions—new theaters—municipal theaters, censorship laws,—every sort of reform. It has remained for the Drama League of America to place its finger upon the really vital issue. For the actual fault of the present situation lies with the easy going American public. You cannot create a New Theater without a public to support it; you cannot force art on an unwilling public no matter how large an A you use in spelling it. In fact, your reforms must begin the other side of the footlights; and if we are to have better plays upon our stage, if we are to do away with the meretricious plays now too frequently there, we must work with this great pleasure-loving good-natured public, and cultivate in it a taste for better drama.

We must create a demand for good drama and the supply will follow—the dramatist, actor and manager are only too willing to fall into line, if the public can be induced to refuse the worthless play and support better drama. The really vital and necessary thing is to secure a public which will enjoy and support good plays.

*Lyman Abbott.

Hence, it has become an important and basic matter to improve the dramatic tastes of the country. In fact, in the opinion of many, this is one of the great problems we have before us as a nation today.

Organized with this very object, the Drama League of America has worked for three years on the problem. In those three years it has discovered many things. One of these is, that there is a real and genuine response to the appeal of the written drama; that the message of the play need not be restricted to the city with a theater, but that through the printed play every community may be reached. Another point worked out by the league is the absolute assurance that the best and in fact the only way to improve the dramatic taste of the country is to inculcate a thorough knowledge of good drama—an intimate acquaintance with the best plays written. As many of these plays are rarely acted now, or if acted are confined to the big cities, the third point easily follows, that by means of the printed play we can gradually so inoculate the entire nation with a knowledge of good drama and what it really is that it will turn instinctively from the cheap and worthless play and demand better things. Consequently the first and most important matter is to make good drama accessible to every one. By spreading knowledge of the best plays of the past and present, all over the country, we are improving the dramatic taste of the nation and paving the way for better conditions in the theaters.

In this effort to increase the reading of plays the Drama League not unnaturally turned early in its career to the libraries, feeling itself largely dependent upon them for the full development of its work. The keenest response has come in return. Over 72 libraries are represented in our membership and keep on file the league literature. The testimony from these libraries is most encouraging. On every side we find the libraries eager to help in this development of public dramatic taste.

Since the only way to improve dramatic taste is by acquiring a thorough knowledge of plays, it is palpably apparent that the libraries can be the greatest possible help in this new movement. To illustrate concretely—The Drama League enters a medium sized town with one public library, inducing the two or three women's clubs to take up each a course in modern drama, interesting the teachers in the high school in the league's high school course, even persuading the grade school to do drama work with the younger pupils. Usually there are formed also several little reading circles. Of course, the first demand is

for the published plays. The students flock to the libraries to get the desired dramas.

In Chicago the testimony has come many times that since the organization of The Drama League public interest has been so keen that the demand for dramas has been phenomenal. Is the library content merely to recognize this condition? By no means. The Drama Department has had to quadruple its supply, and even then is frequently obliged to hold the books in for reference only in order to meet the demand. But see what this has meant to the league to have that quadruple supply of the dramas demanded by its members. From Washington comes the testimony that the organization of the league has increased the demand for drama books; from Los Angeles came a large order for special dramas and reference books needed by our members. The Massachusetts State Library has offered to meet any demands made upon it. Librarians in various communities are officers and directors in this new movement.

May I suggest a few ways in which the libraries can help us? In the first place, it will be a real benefit to any community if its library will become a member of The Drama League and keep its literature on file. In this way the community is kept informed through the Drama League bulletins of the best current plays by its critical analysis; it has access also to the study courses and bibliographies on drama prepared by the league's experts. Secondly, it would be an inestimable help in this task of improving dramatic taste of the community if the library would be sure to have on hand all the dramas listed in our study and reading courses. Thirdly, if the libraries would arrange a handy shelf of worthy drama where "he who runs may read," where the passerby would be attracted by a drama and pick it up to read it, it might induce a taste for better plays, a knowledge of good drama in a previously heedless theater goer. In Evanston, Illinois, for three years this shelf has been maintained in the library by the Drama Club. Every few weeks a new selection of dramas is placed on this little book rack which stands near the main call desk. It is much used and very popular.

The library could also helpfully publish a separate list of its books on drama and dramas, or better yet arrange them in a separate section. Such a list is published yearly by the Evanston Library and several other libraries have recently adopted this plan—notably the Newberry Library, Chicago, and the Kansas City Library.

Another way in which the libraries can

co-operate in raising dramatic taste, is by making it easy for the playgoer to read the dramas which have been published and are to be presented in his city. By co-operation with the Drama League the library might receive word in advance when a published worthy play is to be given in town. It could then see to it either that its copy of that play is withdrawn from circulation and held for reference only, or it could secure extra copies of the play to meet the extra demand. If it could be thoroughly understood that the library was doing this, interest in reading the play could be stimulated. For instance, the library could post a notice stating the coming of the play to town, side by side with the league bulletin or criticism of the play, and the announcement that it could be secured at the book shelf. With this active help of the libraries we might go far toward securing a trained dramatic taste on the part of our theater goers. There are several magazines of special value to the student of drama. It would be a very great help if the libraries made a special point of including these among their subscriptions and of listing them under the Drama Department—as for instance, the *Drama Quarterly*, and *Poet Lore* print in each issue a play which has never been printed in translation before, and which cannot be secured elsewhere. These are extremely valuable to the drama student. The *Drama Quarterly*, moreover, is especially adapted to the needs of the student of drama, and should be accessible to him. It aims to criticize the various books on drama and dramas of special excellence, also publishing notices of the most recent drama movements in this country and abroad. It is not used for league propaganda, but was taken over by The Drama League merely because it was in danger of being abandoned. Moreover, in *Current Opinion* and *Hearst's Magazine* are frequently printed very valuable portions of unpublished new plays. With every issue of *L'Illustration* is published a new French drama in French. It would be an excellent thing if the larger or better equipped libraries could excerpt the plays from these magazines and have them sewed up simply, each complete by itself, and kept with the other dramas. In this way the library could make an excellent modern drama department readily accessible to the league members, obtainable in no other way, and at very slight cost to the library.

A very important way in which the Library Association might help is one which may not be practical, but which your convention might be able to work

out for us. It is in the nature of loan libraries. As we introduce our study courses into the small towns we frequently find no library facilities along our lines. One of our workers made an investigation of the Drama Department in libraries in small towns of five to ten thousand inhabitants in the Middle West, and found that without exception all of those she visited, had only Shakespeare and Faust, with occasionally a volume of *L'Aiglon*. It is easy to see how difficult it will be for clubs and individuals to take up a study of drama under such conditions. Is there any way in which the large state libraries can prepare a loan library at very slight cost, made up of books desired for this special work, which could be borrowed by the local library for the use of its clubs? Of course, in some states, as in Wisconsin and New York, and probably many others, this is covered by the traveling libraries; but there are very many where this is not so. Cannot the libraries go even farther in their effort to improve dramatic taste and meet the demand for dramas and books on dramas, a demand which the Drama League is attempting to create?

Several libraries in various cities, as notably Chicago and Washington, have opened their rooms for Drama League meetings. Cannot this be done in other cities? Surely any way in which you, as public institutions, can increase the interest in good drama, is a part of your proper function. The league work must go hand in hand with the libraries. Without you and your resources, your wisdom and your co-operation, we would be much crippled and sadly curtailed in our possibilities of achievements. On the other hand, now that the development of a national taste for better drama is becoming recognized as a necessity in order to effect any improvement in the conditions of our stage today, now that we fully recognize that the best way to create a better dramatic taste is by familiarity with the best in drama, now that we are working to make the reading of plays popular and wide spread, does it not become a very important branch of the library's activity to take every step possible to increase the reading of plays and the thorough knowledge of dramatic literature on the part of young and old?

The real opportunity is with the children. Here we can create a fine dramatic taste for the future, and here, too, the library can help. In your junior corner, can you not have the plays recommended on our junior list, as suitable for children in order that they may have them for their play acting? Can you not start a Junior League Drama Circle to read and act little chil-

dren's plays, just as you have your story hour? In this way the library is helping us prepare the audiences of the future which shall not only support better drama, but being thoroughly inoculated with an instinctive dramatic taste, will positively demand worthy drama. So will the libraries and The Drama League, representing the universities, schools, clubs and individuals in general have aroused the public conscience to a realization of its responsibilities for the amusements of the people.

MARJORIE A. BEST (MRS. A.
STARR BEST)

President, Drama League of America.

The Macmillan Company, New York, N. Y.,
May 5, 1913.

In reply to your esteemed letter of May 2nd I may say that the matter which seems to me to be of the greatest interest to publishers, and possibly also to librarians, at the present time is the dissemination among the public at large of that correct information in regard to the ever increasing tide of new books which will enable the public to learn of really meritorious works which are published, and avoid the trash which is now being so freely distributed.

Almost the only way at the present time of reaching large numbers of book readers is through the libraries, and this seems sufficient excuse for bringing this, which seems to me to be the most important matter, to your notice and of begging that it may be given publicity among your fellow librarians in order that we may have suggestions for the solution of the difficulty.

Yours very truly,
GEORGE P. BRETT,
President.

Brown University, Providence, R. I.,
April 29, 1913.

In reply to your letter of April 21 I can only say that I am not familiar enough with the conduct of American libraries to make any new suggestions on the question you propose. I think the plan followed by the Providence Public Library is the best one to encourage the reading of the standard works of literature. It has, as you of course know, a pleasant room, easily accessible, in which attractive editions of the best authors can be read. Would it be feasible to supplement this plan by publishing, from time to time, interesting, short descriptions of standard books, giving prospective readers some notion of the subject and peculiar attrac-

tion of each—somewhat after the manner of publishers' alluring (or would-be alluring) notices of new books?

Yours sincerely,

W. C. BRONSON.

Northampton, Mass.,
May 16, 1913.

Your letter of the fourteenth, inviting me to contribute to a symposium of thought concerning library work in America and suggesting the topic, "What is your conception of the ideal librarian," does me great honor. But it brings to my mind very clearly my inability to offer a definition which I could possibly hope would be enlightening or stimulating to a convention of librarians.

The library work of our present day has expanded into such liberal bounds and taken on such a missionary, and at the same time scientific, spirit that one who is merely its beneficiary cannot give himself the hardihood to offer words of criticism or of counsel. I know no work which shows such splendid contrasts to what it was when I began life as does the profession of the public librarian and the professional conception of the library's mission to the world.

It has been my great joy and honor to bring up a large family whose members are now separated and busy in the world's work and it gives me great pleasure to say of them, as of myself, that the modern management of public libraries has made life worth incalculably more than it could have been under the limitations of forty years ago.

With every good wish I beg to remain ever

Yours truly,
GEORGE W. CABLE.

Santa Barbara, Cal.,
May 5, 1913.

It gives me great pleasure to attempt a brief answer to the question you suggest—"Is the fiction circulated by our public libraries helping to enlighten the people on social and economic problems?" I should be inclined to answer the question decidedly in the affirmative. In addition to the letters I receive from persons whose only access to modern fiction is through the public library, concerning my own work, I have, in the course of political campaigns, and in places in various parts of the country where I have made another sort of address, held many conversations with men and women in the audiences. These have interested me greatly. My own experience corroborates a fact to which I have heard several librarians at-

test (and it is to me the most hopeful phenomenon in our American life), that the American public—mainly through the libraries—is reading more widely and more intelligently than those who do not come into direct contact with a large portion of it guess. Four or five months ago I received a letter from a poor woman who lives on a farm near one of the larger towns of Massachusetts giving me a list of the books she had got from the library during the past year. She had read them all; and they included, in addition to two good biographies and Royce's "Loyalty," several of the best recent novels, both English and American, dealing seriously with the problems of modern life. And finally, the other day when I was in San Francisco, I had a long conversation with an ex-burglar who had served a term in the penitentiary, and who has reformed and has been for the last eight years making an honest living, on the subject of such novels as you mention. His comments on them were not only interesting but often valuable. His source was, of course, the public library. Hence, I am glad of this opportunity to pay my tribute to the librarian, and to express, as an American citizen, my appreciation of the work he is doing.

Sincerely yours,
WINSTON CHURCHILL.

Bureau of Education,
Washington, D. C.
April 29, 1913.

The public libraries have no better opportunity for effective service than that offered through generous and intelligent co-operation with the public schools and especially with the high schools and the highest grades of the grammar schools. Ideas and ideals gained through reading in childhood and youth effect the character more fundamentally and more permanently, and determine moral conduct for a longer time than ideas and ideals gained later. It should also be remembered that children have more time to read than men and women immersed in the strong current of adult life.

The public library in every city and town should be open on the freest terms to all school children and they should feel that they have the heartiest welcome to it. Not only should the teacher encourage children to use the library; librarians should invite them to do so and make all possible preparations to serve them. There should be in the libraries a sufficient number of reading rooms to accommodate children of different grades. In these should be assistant librarians

who know the very best in literature for children and youth and who know also how to deal with children and how to make the rooms attractive. It is all important that the reading rooms and those in charge be attractive, respected, liked, and loved. It is especially important that children be led to read those things that have permanent and eternal value. No one should be permitted to direct the reading of children who thinks it necessary to have books written down to them or who does not know that the greatest books are the simplest and the most wholesome. The children's librarians should also be whole minded and whole hearted people with a broad and interesting knowledge of the world and life. It will be fatal if they are narrow, prejudiced, sectarian, or over-provincial.

The public library should have the services of one or more good story tellers who know the best stories of the world and can tell them in an interesting way. As often as once a week at least there should be a separate hour for all the children. The children should, of course, come in sections—primary, grammar grades, and high school.

In addition to the services rendered as here suggested at the library, all the children in school or out should have library cards and for the convenience of the children every school building should be made a branch library for the use of children at least. I see no reason why it should not also serve as a branch library for the older people. It would not cost much to have some one or more teachers at each school serve as librarians under the direction of the librarian of the central library. Through the branch library at the school many parents and other older members of the family could be reached who never can be reached through the ordinary central and branch library buildings. Attractive statements about books, especially new books should be sent to the parents by the children and books might be ordered and returned through the children. It would not be difficult to induce pupils and teachers to arrange reading circles and clubs among the adult members of families living near the school, the books used by the reading circles to be ordered from and returned to the school branch library. Teachers and principals would also be willing to arrange for weekly meetings for the members of these reading circles and clubs, the meetings to be held at the school. Certificates and diplomas might be given for the reading of certain groups of books.

The library should own in sets books

helpful to teachers and children in their studies and should, at the request of superintendents and principals, place sets of these in the several schools for use in school, but not to be taken out except over night or over Saturdays and Sundays and holidays.

Libraries should also own large collections of illustrative pictures and lantern slides. These should be cataloged as books and lists of them should be in the hands of school superintendents, supervisors, principals, and teachers. The pictures and slides should be loaned the schools freely upon their request. School officers and teachers should be asked to assist in selecting these and all other collections for the use of children.

The library should serve in this way not only the schools of the city, but also the country and village schools in the counties in which they are located. Through the country schools more good can be accomplished, frequently, than through the city schools. Country boys and girls are more eager to read than city boys and girls. They have more time for it and will read better books. The library should have a direct relation with every school and every teacher in the county. Of course, the county should pay for this service, but it should have it whether it pays for it or not. The city cannot afford to withhold it. The city depends on the country for its prosperity and life. The children now in the country will make up a large part of the population of the city twenty or twenty-five years from now.

In many places the public libraries are doing all these things to some extent; in no place to as great an extent as is possible. By using to the best advantage the opportunities here suggested, public libraries may double their usefulness.

Yours sincerely,

P. P. CLAXTON,
Commissioner.

New York City,
April 4, 1913.

The Negro American is being helped greatly by public libraries wherever he is given reasonable encouragement to enter them. Often in the North, he is not made to feel welcome in these libraries and in most of the public and private libraries of the South, he is rigorously excluded. It would seem that a statement from the American Library Association to the effect that the color line in literature is silly, is much needed at present.

Very sincerely yours,

W. E. B. DU BOIS.

Mayor's Office,
Boston, Mass.

Of course, the financial return for money expended to maintain a public library cannot be definitely stated, as may be done in connection with municipal activities which deal solely with material things.

It is impossible to trace along commercial lines the influence upon the community of an institution whose prime purpose is not profit, is not even a product that can be expressed in terms of dollars, but is the enlargement of the individual life, and the promotion of higher standards of citizenship.

On the lowest and most sordid plane however, an institution like the Boston public library is worth many times its cost to the city merely on account of the number of persons from abroad who are attracted to the building as an example of monumental architecture, or because it contains exceptional works of art in its mural decorations, or who visit it as a museum of rare and interesting books. These visitors number thousands yearly; many of them stay in the city for several days, and their entertainment and their expenditure of money while they remain, add to the commercial prosperity of the city.

In somewhat the same way, but on a much higher plane, directly within the scope of the library function, numbers of students are yearly drawn to the city by the advantages the library offers for intellectual research. And the library enhances the importance and value of the various schools and colleges within our borders, by enlarging their intellectual resources.

In other directions the value of the library to the community is evident. The fact that it is here adds something to the value of every estate in the city. Persons seeking a desirable place of residence prefer a city or town which has good schools and a well-equipped and adequately supported library to a place without these institutions, even if no direct use is made by such persons of either. The influence of a good library on the general conditions in a community is therefore a profitable asset.

In assimilating the different elements of a mixed and rapidly growing population, the work of the library is obvious, and its results far outweigh their cost. And the increased efficiency of individuals, which the library promotes, has its effect in inestimable public benefits. For example, to take a single possible case out of many, here is a young man without money or influence but who has talent which, if properly fostered may become

the source of power. Through the opportunities for study given by the public library he perfects an invention, or writes a poem, or enters a useful profession by means of which he ministers to the comfort and enjoyment of his fellow-men and confers honor upon this city. How can one over-estimate the social value of such lives, or the part which the library has played in their development? Such instances are by no means few, and unquestionably they supply an affirmative answer to the question as to whether or not the library is making an adequate return for its cost.

JOHN F. FITZGERALD.

Chicago, Illinois,
May 10, 1913.

Your question, "Is the fiction circulated by our public library helping to enlighten people on social and economic problems?" is one which I can answer promptly and affirmatively. Looking at fiction in the mass, it is without doubt an enormous educational influence. Leaving out of view for the moment the historical novel, or the sociologic novel, and taking merely the local novel, the novel which vividly portrays the life of a special village, or country, or nation, we find it of the greatest service in teaching the people of one country, or class, how the people of other countries and other classes live. Such books bring the ends of the earth together. They unite the north and the south, the east and the west, in common sympathy and understanding. They contribute very largely to the higher patriotism, as well as to the profounder social brotherhood.

It would be easy to criticize fiction for other and less valuable content, but speaking generally, I believe it to be second only to the stage in its power to affect the young student of life and manners.

Very sincerely yours,

HAMLIN GARLAND.

Ithaca, N. Y.,
May 16, 1913.

You ask for comment—as "related particularly with their own special interests" and at the risk of being charged with "talking shop," I have been brutally frank. Yet I hope it will cheer these splendid workers for civilization.

The library is not "doing as much as it might to be a true University to the People." Books alone will not attract the insensitive or indifferent, nor will handsome buildings. Equal to other necessity of the library to be "a true university to the people," is that of **arousing interest, awakening curiosity and alluring into path-**

ways that lead to books and reading. I know of nothing better than to have cheap, popular, illustrated lecture courses that constantly refer to books and the special theme.

Does the local librarian or do active directors, attempt seriously to tap the knowledge of the local specialist, professional man, or public spirited speaker? Do the library people emphasize the necessity of close, personal contact, as far as possible, with the individuals and with the people? Libraries must be more human: No machinery, or salaried personnel, however costly or efficient, within chosen lines of activity, can do without that same human sympathy, which in other professions, is known to outweigh in value, all edifices, or the paid professional corps; yes, even in religion or philanthropy. Not all, but most libraries—and I have looked in, and at, and around many—are too self-centered.

Yet with this criticism, honestly called for and as honestly given, none can appreciate the librarian more than I. To guide youthful reading, warning as well as advising and alluring them to high flights, is to make the librarian's calling **second to none** in our complex civilization.

With all good wishes to the librarians of the United States and Canada.

Sincerely yours,
WILLIAM ELIOT GRIFFIS.

P. S. Every library should have a lecture hall and not be afraid even of the "fit audience though few."

Clark University,
Worcester, Mass.,

May 17, 1913.

My experience is a long one with university libraries, but I have had far less to do with public libraries.

The greatest need of the specialist and expert is help in finding all, and especially the latest, often very scattered, literature on the special point on which he is conducting his research, and I believe that in the future every academic library will have a few specialists with a good knowledge of languages, of Ph. D. rank, who can do just this. We have one such here, to whom my work owes more than to anybody else. If I ask her to find me, e. g., all the recent references on a topic, be it ever so special, including perhaps a score of archives and special journals, back for three or five years as I may specify, up to the latest arrival, I get this list, which always includes many things our library does not have, then take it to the librarian, who can generally get about everything

by borrowing far and near. These, together with the resources here, are placed upon a table in an alcove where I can work or take the books home. This makes a perfectly ideal condition, and it is at the same time indispensable for advanced special work, and everything in a university library should be plastic to this end.

A public librarian, it seems to me, should study all the changing interests in a community or in special parts of it, and be able to print in the daily press whenever any topic is prominent a little article telling in a few lines the point of a few books or articles; e. g. a manual training high school is opened. The daily paper should state that the library has a good collection of literature up to date on that subject (if it has), and give a few points from a few of the best books, naming them. A few titles are not enough.

Another point that interests me greatly is the library story telling. I think more should be done, not less, in this line for children, and that books illustrating topics in geography, history, etc., should be not only laid before teachers but that the classes should meet there and have the things shown to them. Why does not the public library go into some of the wonderful illustrative material in the above and other topics, which is so characteristic of German schools, and of which American schools know almost nothing? Our educational Museum here has lately spent thousands of dollars and collected thousands of these illustrations all the way from wall pictures to bound pictures, illustrating material from primary grades up into college, which we loan as we do books to teachers, parents and others. There is a very great new departure possible here. Why does not your Association look into this? It has been a great find for us. And about everything in our large collection and its use, to my mind, might be done by public libraries although none of them that I know of has done much of anything along that line. I am

Very truly yours,
G. STANLEY HALL.

The University of Chicago,
Chicago, May 16, 1913.

While I am not at all a specialist in library science and art, I am daily a debtor to your profession. In answer to the question—"What rank should the library have in the scale of the community's social assets?"—I should indicate the following hints of an argument: The income of every family is increased by the possession and use of a public library. This item is never found set down in the accounts of a family

as a part of their income, and the students of budgets are too apt to overlook it; but all communal property, as lake fronts, parks, playgrounds, public schools, public free libraries and reading rooms, are so much addition to the enjoyments of all who have the taste and inclination to use them. As the library contains the very best thoughts of the greatest men and women of all time, I should say that the public free library is among the very highest possessions of the people.

When we consider the dangers of idleness or of a depraved use of leisure, and when we consider the splendid opportunity of spiritual growth which comes from intelligent and systematic daily use of the library, we must place this institution among the highest agencies of social amelioration and progress. Every year sees improvement in the administration of this noble trust by the professional custodians and administrators. There is manifest everywhere a spirit of courtesy, patience and enterprise, which does honor to this branch of the profession of educators. The librarian and his assistants are colleagues of instructors in all institutions of every grade, and those of us who are teaching feel ourselves to be under profound obligations to our companions in service.

Sincerely yours,

CHARLES RICHMOND HENDERSON.

Chicago, April 7, 1913.

I have your letter of April 2nd in which you are good enough to ask me to write a few lines on the topic: "Should the public library exercise censorship over the books it circulates?"

I suppose there is no question that the good public library should have somewhere in its shelves all books of serious intent, and should circulate in a restricted and properly guarded way any book no matter what its subject matter. So the question comes down to the propriety of circulating generally without restriction all sorts of books. I should hesitate to say that a public library should exercise no supervision over its circulation, although I myself have suffered from what I consider unjust and unmerited notoriety—due to the prescient sensibilities of certain librarians, as you know. But when you will admit the principle of censorship, the matter is a delicate one, of course. It would seem to me, for example, unwise to circulate freely books of medicine. As to fiction—or what publishers call "the general list" of books, I think an intelligent librarian should hesitate a long time before putting on his or her *index expurgatorius* any publications vouched for by the imprint of a reputable

publishing firm. For such books have actually passed a severe censorship before being put out. I realize it is all a personal matter, for what to me is good red meat may be poison to my brother. I think, for instance, that such a novel as *The Rosary* is infinitely more pernicious than the *Kreutzer Sonata*, *La Terre*, or *Germinal*, but the average librarian wouldn't. So I am afraid the matter will have to stand just where it is today—a book will be censored as unfit or unclean according to the whim of the individual librarian. Presumably the public librarian is at least abreast of, if not superior in culture and idealism to his community, and as our communities improve our librarians will become persons of wider intelligence and culture than they are now in some cases and exercise their censorial powers with more real discrimination.

Apropos of this matter you may be interested to know that a few months ago the *New York Post* in an editorial protested against certain young American realists and their treatment of sex—instanced Mr. Howells and myself as examples of "clean American reticent realism!" This, after all the roar over "*Together*" is an amusing illustration of growth in critical opinion. Mr. Howells sent me the editorial but I haven't it with me.

Truthfully,

ROBERT HERRICK.

P. S. My own views on the proper treatment of sex in fiction will be briefly touched upon in an article on American fiction to be printed in the *Yale Review* before long.

Chicago, May 17, 1913.

You ask me "is the fiction circulated by our public libraries helping to enlighten the people on social and economic problems?" That is a question which a librarian can answer better than any author. In general, it seems to me, magazine fiction is doing more in that line than book fiction. Some of the greatest circulations ever attained by periodicals have been built upon a shrewd knowledge of the American materialism. One editor voices it:—"Americans are interested about two-thirds in business, and one-third in love." That editorial policy has won in this country.

As to social and economic problems, more properly considered, I don't think fiction is doing much for the people. This really is the fault of the people, or of human nature, or rather of American human nature. I think we are one of the most neurotic and hysterical people in the

world, which means that presently we shall be one of the most swiftly decadent people in the world. For this reason, we have sudden fashions in fiction. Just now we like to read about "action" of heroic sort—precisely as we pay to see baseball games instead of playing baseball ourselves. Also, we are for the time given over to a wave of erotic fiction, just this side of indecent. At one time we were crazy over historical fiction, before that, over dialect fiction, before that over analytical fiction. Therefore, I should say that our book fiction does not and cannot do much in the way of handling social and economic problems at the present day. Once in a while, we have a political novel, machine-made, and like all other political novels. Sometimes, we get a business novel, in turn like all other business novels. We don't have really very many thoughtful novels good enough to be called big. I fancy it would not pay authors to write them, or public libraries to buy them. We are having a period of business and political sack cloth and ashes, but, drunk or sober, broke or prosperous, the American character seems to me annually to grow more hectic and hysterical, and less inclined to care for big things and good stuff. Part of this is the fault of our newspapers, but most of it is our own fault. We care for making money and for little else, and we spend money whether we have it or not. The public libraries would be the natural agency for correcting some of these things, but frankly I don't know how they could do it.

Yours very truly,

EMERSON HOUGH.

New York City.

Why should not the libraries amplify the work they are already doing by the promotion of the public schools as well as libraries as social and civic centers? Schoolhouses should be constructed with all equipments for branch libraries, just as they are now equipped with gymnasiums and baths. The library should not be an accident in the public school; it should be an integral part of it. The schoolhouse is the natural place for the library. To it the children come daily—little messengers who would secure books from printed slips for their parents, too tired or too distant from the library to serve themselves. The library should be the school rest and reading room. It would relieve the tedium of regular school work. It would lend variety to education; it would enrich it and beautify it.

In addition, great economy would be effected by converting the school into a li-

brary; there would be a saving in construction, in maintenance, in operation. The fine social sense of the modern librarian would have a reaction on education and would lead to other activities being introduced into the schools.

The American library is the model of the world in many ways. It has led the movement for the widening of public services to old and young. It is one of the most inspirational achievements of the American city, and it could do a substantial service by promoting the social center idea, which is so actively engaging the minds of people all over the country.

(Signed) FREDERIC C. HOWE.

New York, N. Y.
April 30, 1913.

In response to your kind invitation to send a brief message on the subject—"Can public libraries legitimately attempt amusement as well as instruction of the people?" I would reply to the affirmative. If literature is an art, and if libraries are to be as they should be—reservoirs of literature—they surely cannot be complete without giving an important place to arts' most human appeal, amusement. The novel, invented to amuse, stands today as the vital force in literature. Of course, by "amusement" I do not mean a vaudeville. Shakespeare wrote to amuse; and if he does not offer a popular line today it is because modern writers are better chosen to amuse our century. Indeed, if you remove the fiction department—the amusement section—from your library you reduce it to the plans of a machine—an admirable machine, perhaps—but without a human soul to drive it.

Sincerely yours,
WALLACE IRWIN.

Carnegie Institution of Washington,
Washington, D. C.,
June 5, 1913.

The specific question which you propound, "What can the library do to encourage the study of American history?" is one which I suppose must have very different answers for different sorts of libraries. In the case of libraries of moderate size in small cities, it has sometimes appeared to me that the money used in the purchase of books on American history was too exclusively used in buying the less expensive sort of books, those in one or two or three volumes, of which it is perfectly easy to get a considerable number out of each year's appropriations; while on the other hand, the purchase of certain books of value in expensive sets was never

made, because it could not easily be made in any one given year. If the purchasing policy were given a somewhat longer range, extending over several years, one might plan to redress this inequality. To avoid speaking as if I were recommending any one long set of Americana for purchase, let me adduce as an instance a library of forty or fifty thousand volumes with which I am familiar which has in the past twenty years bought a great many books of English history, without ever yet having afforded the purchase of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, obviously because it was too large a morsel for any one year's budget.

If I were to proceed to make any suggestion for the larger libraries, I might select for comment the relative lack of co-operation among such libraries in respect to the pursuit of the more expensive specialties. It is plain that the interest of students are, in respect to restricted specialties of this class better served on the whole by their being able to find relatively complete collections in one place, rather than scattered fragments of such collections in various places. The ambition of libraries for possession might well be tempered by some closer approach to systematic organization of these things, whereby certain ones should be recognized as belonging plainly in the field of a certain library without competition on the part of the others. I am speaking, of course, of things which only a few students are seeking, and which they must expect to seek by travel, and not of those things for which there is a separate effective demand in every large city.

May I also suggest the question whether it is not a legitimate use of the funds of a public library to pay recognized experts, resident in its city or summoned from elsewhere, to go over the shelves relating to a particular subject and carefully signalize those gaps which are almost certain to occur; to name, in other words, any important books which have been omitted but which are necessary to make the collection a well-rounded one for the needs of the particular locality as the librarian sees them. I think also that university and college libraries are particularly in need of such periodical redress, because professors are so prone to request books needed for the immediate purposes of their classes, and to exhaust their appropriations by such requests, forgetting the need of building up rounded collections for general purposes; and the librarian, on his part, feels a certain delicacy about suggesting books for which the professor has evinced no desire, though

often he will agree they were desirable, if their absence were called to his attention. Believe me

Very truly yours,
J. F. JAMESON.

Hadley, Mass.,
May 20, 1913.

I have your recent letter asking for some brief comment on such phase of library work as most appeals to me.

At present, in accord with the trend of current thought in other matters, I am inclined to lay stress on efficiency; and under that head I would urge that librarians, especially in the smaller places, do much strenuous and persistent weeding among the books that find their way to the shelves. Feed the furnace with the books that are no longer useful in your particular library, or in some other way absolutely dispose of them.

Much of the fiction, both for grown-ups and young people, should go, after the first interest in it has waned. Many also of the information books decline in value with the passing years and should not remain a permanent incubus. Very few of the government publications are of practical use in the average library.

We have altogether too much veneration for printed matter. Library housecleanings to discard the literary rubbish and misfits are a real need. Quality is decidedly more important than quantity, if you would have charm and the widest usefulness.

Yours very truly,
CLIFTON JOHNSON.

Stanford University, Cal.,
April 11, 1913.

In response to your kind letter of April 5th, and after refreshing my mind by consultation with librarian friends, with your kind permission I may say a word on the theme, "That librarians should sometimes take account of stock," that they should consider the reasons for their existence and find out how nearly their present day activities coincide with the purposes for which they are established.

With one or two notable exceptions public libraries in the United States are a development of the last quarter of the 19th Century. Until about 1895, or possibly 1900 the efforts of librarians were directed toward perfecting methods of administration, cataloging, etc. Then having arrived at mutual agreement as to forms of procedure they devoted themselves more and more to library extension. They realized that only fractions of their respective communities were in touch with the li-

braries. In a city of 400,000 inhabitants perhaps 40,000 or 10 per cent would make use of library privileges, and the circulation of a million volumes per year meant the use of only 2½ books per year for each inhabitant. Then commenced the era of branch libraries, deposit stations, libraries in schools, libraries in factories, in fire-houses; a resort to every possible means to extend usefulness of the library throughout the whole community. Not satisfied with these expedients other forms of extension are being adopted. I am told that "one library publishes a weekly paper heralding the advantages of its city. It has established a business man's information branch, compiled an index to the products manufactured within the city, and holds itself ready to give information as to where the best tennis balls, suit cases and everything else can be purchased." Undoubtedly this is a public convenience, but it seems to be getting a little away from original library purposes. There is a tendency for libraries to so scatter their energies that they lose sight of the main objects of their being. They exhibit the same tendency which can be seen in the curricula of many colleges which offer courses upon every conceivable subject, the lasting value of which to those who pursue them is certainly questionable.

Libraries are not exempt from the prevalent tendency of municipal, state and federal agencies to extend their activities and increase the burden of taxes. It is safe to say that in many public libraries the budgets have been more than doubled in the last 15 years. It is a question whether the real service to the community has gained in proportion. It is not necessary to make hourly deliveries to downtown delivery stations of the latest thing in fiction, but it is essential that the libraries should do their utmost to maintain ideals. The library which has set apart in a separate room a collection of standard literature has performed a notable service for its community and furnished an example worthy of imitation. It is a part of the best work of the library to assist in perpetuating only that which is worthy of survival.

Very truly yours,
DAVID STARR JORDAN.

The French Embassy,
Washington, D. C.,
May 8, 1913.

On the question you put me: "Are our libraries helping to make better citizens of those from over-seas?" I must decline to give an answer. It would be somewhat odd on the part of one who is not him-

self a citizen of this country and whose opportunities have been scant, for studying such a problem, to express an opinion.

Concerning librarians, as such, I may say that my experience with them, under many climes and skies, has ever been of the pleasantest. Their keeping company with the thinkers and writers of all times, spending their days in those temples where the wisdom, the folly, the dreams, the beauty of ages is stored for the contemplation or warning of succeeding generations, gives them, of whatever nationality they be, a philosophical turn of mind, a benevolent desire to help, a friendliness to the untutored who want to know more. For me they are the typical men of good will for whom there will be peace.

Believe me,

Very truly yours,

JUSSERAND.

Chicago, May 5.

"Can public libraries legitimately attempt amusement as well as instruction of the people?" Since you ask me the question, I feel obliged to answer it in all seriousness. In my opinion the public library ought not to be turned into a place of amusement. Let us have this one institution left as a refuge from amusement. The general desire of the public to be amused has caused it to become almost impossible for one to go anywhere or see anything without becoming conscious of the fact that the first and generally the sole purpose of everything is to amuse. The preachers make their sermons amusing, the poets make their poems amusing, the artists make their pictures amusing, the merchants make their shops amusing; one cannot eat in a public place without being amused. Steamships and railway trains are operated for the amusement of passengers; every vacant storeroom will by tomorrow have become a place of amusement and plans are already being made to convert funerals into amusing affairs. Spare to us the one place in which we may hope to escape from amusement. Let the public library remain grand, gloomy and peculiar.

Sincerely yours,

S. E. KISER.

Chicago, April 9, 1913.

In reply to your letter of April 6, 1913, would say—The modern city library is covering a most desirable field in meeting the needs of a large element of the public, which looks to it almost exclusively for information along library and allied lines. A popular library should be able to supply information on all subjects of

a general character and should not proceed along lines of reference facilities except in a general way. This ground is covered by private gifts and educational institutions. The city library should, it seems to me, be constituted along liberal lines, adapted to entertain as well as instruct. Any means adapted to stimulate the public desire for the use of its privileges properly guarded, cannot fail to be of general benefit. Thus lectures, story telling, art exhibits, and even victrola concerts, loan of pianola rolls, etc., may serve to induct the mind into the wealth of knowledge embraced within its wonderful collection of books. The portals of the city library should be made insidiously alluring, with the expectation that once within them, the reader will go farther.

Very truly yours,

C. C. KOHLSAAT.

Northampton, Mass.,

June 12, 1913.

To My Fellow Workers in Libraries,
Greetings:

I always feel a little bashful when I go into a strange library as I sometimes do and happen on a librarian who confronts me with things I say about librarians in the "Lost Art of Reading." Usually I speak up quite quickly and say to a librarian, "Oh, but you know I do not mean YOU!"

But in speaking as I am now to all the librarians there are in the United States and Canada this seems to be inconvenient.

I am afraid that if there were any nice thoughtful benignant way of taking each librarian in this great mass meeting, of all the librarians there are, one side and whispering to him quietly, "Oh, but you know I do not mean YOU," I would probably do it!

But being driven to it and being faced out this way as I am today, two or three thousand to one, there seems to be nothing for it but to face the music and to look you in the eye a minute and say once for all, "I DO mean you, I mean each of you and all of you," and I accuse you of not taking immediate, powerful and conclusive steps to convince donors of libraries and the public of the rights of librarians, of your right to perform your duties under decent, spiritual conditions as members of a high and spirited calling, as professional men and women, as artists and as fellow human beings and not as overworked, under-assisted, weary servants of books.

The charges against the library donors and managers that I brought out in my

new book "Crowds," more particularly the chapters, "Mr. Carnegie speaks up," and "Mr. Carnegie tries to make people read," are charges that are going to be answered most successfully by people who admit that they are largely true and who will then proceed tomorrow, before everybody, to turn them into lies. The sooner the librarians and trustees and public men of this country proceed to make what I am saying today about public libraries hopelessly ridiculous and out-of-date, the sooner I will be happy.

If I were to move into a strange community and wanted to be a valuable citizen in it, the first thing I would do would be to go to the public library and ask the librarians and their assistants this question, "Who are the interesting boys in this town?"

If the librarians could tell me I would linger around, and in one way or another, get acquainted with those boys, follow them up and see what I could do to connect them with the men with the books, and ideas and ambitions and opportunities that belong to them.

If the librarians could not give me a list of such boys I would ask them why.

If they told me that they had not time to attend to such things I would ask the trustees why.

If the trustees had not selected librarians naturally interested in boys and books and had not provided such librarians with the necessary assistants so they would have time and spirit to do such things I would turn to the people and I would challenge the people to elect trustees for their library who knew what a library was for.

I sometimes think of the librarian in a town as the Mayor Of What People Think, and if he does not have time to read books and to love ideas and inventions in himself and in other people and does not take time to like boys and get the ideas and boys together, he cannot be in a town where he lives, a good Mayor Of What People Think.

We shall never have great libraries in the United States until the typical librarian exalts his calling and takes his place in our modern life seriously—as the ruler of our civilization, the creator of the environment of a nation and as the dictator of the motives and ideals of cities, the discoverer of great men and the champion of the souls of the people.

I candidly ask you all: What is there that can be done in America in the way of letting librarians keep on being folks?

One almost wishes that all the members of the library association of America would

write to Andrew Carnegie, show him under with letters from the nation, asking him to try the experiment of having at least one of his libraries in the United States fitted up as elaborately and as elegantly with librarians as it is with dumb waiters, marble pillars, book racks and umbrella stands.

When we go into a library—some of us—we want to feel our minds being gently exposed to cross-fertilization. We may not want librarians to throw themselves at us—come down plump into our minds the minute we enter whether or no, but we do want when we come into a library to be able to find (if we steal around a little), eager, contagious, alluring librarians who can make people read books and from whom people cannot get away without reading books. Every library ought to be supplied with at least one librarian in each department, stuck all over with books, like burrs, so that nobody can touch him or be near him without carrying away a book on him that he's got to read and that he will long to read and will read until somebody drives him to bed!

Faithfully yours,

GERALD STANLEY LEE.

Northampton, Mass.

Greetings and good wishes to the men and women who hold the keys:

I saw in England, last year, a very old library where the books are chained to the shelves. They have always been chained there; at first because they were valuable and human nature was weak, and now to preserve the tradition. But in general, either because the value of books is less or because human nature is less weak, we trust our public with its books unchained. The shelves of most libraries, I understand, are open freely and the loss of books is small—small enough to be disregarded, you tell me, in relation to the general good.

And not only is the public freely admitted. In Northampton I have seen, many times, the books put on wheels and traveling out to the public; they are in a kind of clothes-basket set on a truck with tiny wheels; and the janitor trundles the truck to the trolley, and the trolley carries the books to Leeds or Florence or Williamsburg, it may be—I do not know their destination. I only see them traveling away on wheels. This is only A-B-C to all of you. Most of you could tell me much more interesting things that libraries are doing. Some of you have already seen that it is not enough to put the books on wheels and trundle them out to the public, but that the public itself must be followed and

captured. You tell me that in the future the library that would be really up-to-date must catch its readers where it can and chain books to them.

Presently we shall need wings to follow life and bring it back to its books. For life moves swiftly; and you who hold the keys and who are putting books on wheels and sending them out will not stop till the life in books and the life of the world are come together again. Presently we shall all work for this. You have freed the books, you have sent them out, you have reached out to give them to us freely. Presently you will unlock the books themselves and open the pages; and the time when a child studied only a few books will belong to the past; the living use of books will be a part of the life of every child that is born into the world. Presently we shall all work together for this—with you who hold the keys.

JENNETTE LEE.

New York, N. Y.,
April 3rd, 1913.

I'd like to do as you request—but I have no facts to contribute. I feel sure that the public library is doing much to improve dramatic taste—but I can't adduce any evidence.

Yours truly,
BRANDER MATTHEWS.

Philadelphia, Pa.

The librarian's constant difficulty is now, what shall a library try to collect, what shall it keep? This has become a grave question. Being myself book greedy, a gourmand of print, I am a poor judge of what to reject.

Soon or late the average man, who is presumed to represent common sense, will ask, "What is the use of these accumulations of books?" This average man can never consider a library with comment of imagination. A book is for him a book, whereas for you or me a book is a saint, a hero, a martyr, a fool, a seraph of light bearing science. Let us drop him with a word of scorn. We shall not ever understand one another. Nor would he have the faith in books of that Samonicus who, for the cure of a tertian fever in the Emperor Gordian, ordered the fourth book of the Iliad to be applied to the head of the patient. That has long puzzled me—why the fourth? But Mr. Average awaits a quotation. A voice out of the splendid day of Elizabeth shall say it: "Sir, he hath not fed of the dainties that are bred of a book; he hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink."

S. WEIR MITCHELL.

The Nation,
New York City,
May 5th, 1913.

I fear you must be charging me with discourtesy for delaying so long my reply to your letter of April 19th. I have in fact had the intention of writing to you rather fully on the subject of public libraries and best sellers, for use in your conference in Kaaterskill. One obligation after another, however, has kept me from doing this and now I can only express to you briefly my conviction that the public library ought by no means to undertake "to supply all the best sellers hot from the press." It has always seemed to me that the office of any institution such as the library is as much to direct and restrain public taste as it is to supply what is demanded.

With regret that I cannot reply at greater length to your flattering request for my opinion, I am

Very truly yours,
PAUL E. MORE, Editor.

Washington, D. C.,
May 17, 1913.

When your letter came I was, I believe, away from home. At least I never had an opportunity to answer it until just now, having been absent a good deal since its date. Although you do not set the time of the coming conference, I assume that it is not too late to answer your question and I am writing now simply to acknowledge receipt of your letter. I will, however, say that I believe that the circulation of fiction by our public libraries does help to enlighten the people on all problems whatsoever, for, in the first place, fiction contains many of the standard novels which certainly have a tendency for good; and secondly, however trashy novels are, in the main they have an educating effect.

Yours very truly,
THOMAS NELSON PAGE.

4 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.,
April 29, 1913.

I cannot better comply with your request (made on behalf of the American Library Association) than by giving you a leaf from my own experience of twenty-five years, as President or managing director of a rural library, which serves the public in a mountain town where I chiefly reside, and yet is a private institution, receiving no aid whatever from town or state. And my message is to libraries of small means and resources, so situated that trained librarians or assistants are not to be had.

We have by this time about 5,000 volumes, all obtained through gift or pur-

chase, of which less than half are works of fiction; and the list, on the whole, includes most standard works. From one benefactor we have a good stone building, erected last year upon a lot of our own; and by the time the testamentary provision of another benefactor takes effect hereafter we shall have an endowment fund ample enough to place our institution upon a permanent footing of liberal expenditure. Hitherto our annual income has been small and met by life memberships, special entertainments and personal gifts, in which summer visitors and the townspeople combine.

In order that our books should be classified but without too much effort I introduced, some years ago, the following scheme: A, denotes works of fiction; B, biography, history, travels, etc.; C, poetry, essays and miscellaneous; P, periodicals and pamphlets (by bound volumes or in cases); R, books of reference. Juvenile books under these respective heads are marked by an added J.

We have no card catalog and find our patrons served more to their liking, and perhaps more economically, by issuing printed lists, frequently, which give the author and the title simply; the number, and letter, as printed, indicating the subject. About 1905 a pamphlet catalog was brought out which gave our list complete to that date. Since that time, supplement lists have been printed at convenience; while the latest books are always posted in the library on written sheets. When the supplements become sufficiently numerous we expect to issue a second full pamphlet catalog; and so on. We cannot pay for expert assistance to keep up a card catalog properly, with our present means; and what our patrons most want is to have individual printed lists that they can readily consult.

About 90 per cent of our circulation consists of A or AJ books, but we try to increase the demand for the B and C books. So, too, the books most eagerly sought are those last added, but we encourage the reading of standard authors wherever we may.

Yours very truly,

JAMES SCHOULER.

Indianapolis, Ind.,

April 24, 1913.

"Is the fiction circulated by our public libraries helping to enlighten the people on social and economic problems?"

George Meredith, in a letter written in 1884, said:

"I think that all right use of life, and the one secret of life, is to pave ways for

the firmer footing of those who succeed us. . . . Close knowledge of our fellows, discernment of the laws of existence, these lead to great civilization. I have supposed that the novel, exposing and illustrating the natural history of man, may help us to such sustaining roadside gifts."

Merely "entertaining" fiction is comparable to vaudeville or to tight-rope walking; its use may be to amuse the tired laborer of all sorts; its overuse, however, tends to become a habit and produce flaccid minds. Save for this, all fiction which depends on "plot"—always a hash of used meats—or on farcical or melodramatic "situation," is almost negligible. But on the whole, and because of this flaccidity, I believe, it would be a good thing if all merely "entertaining" fiction could be destroyed.

A very small portion of that fiction which is produced by artists seeking to know and reveal life, deals with economic problems. Except for the work of a few writers (Mr. H. G. Wells, for instance,—he includes economic discussions) it concerns itself with social relations and "the natural history of man." Its circulation must certainly help to enlighten people upon social problems. Here I must fail you, for I do not know what type of fiction has the circulation you mean; the most general circulation, I take it. A novel is helpful as it is a revelation of truth; it is always harmful when it is written from a false or assumed point-of-view; it is very likely to be harmful when it is founded upon shallow observation or a cocksure philosophy. Most of the fiction produced in our country today is founded upon nothing except the desire to circulate; therefore it shouldn't!

Very sincerely yours,

BOOTH TARKINGTON.

Elizabeth, N. J.,

May 16, 1913.

The question you ask is not debatable. The public library is among the foremost aids the American boy has today. As great a help as the library is the librarian. Much depends upon his personal interest, enthusiasm, judgment, appreciation of the book and the boy. "The man behind the book," provides the power.

Librarians undoubtedly are a help not only to the boy, but to the writer of boy's books. But like all other classes there are librarians and librarians. Some are efficient, some too theoretical, some visionary, some without the capacity to understand the normal boy, and a few are deficient. As far as I have observed, the limitations of the librarians are not so much in their knowledge of books as in their understand-

ing of boys. Every profession has its special peril. The minister may become dogmatic, the judge autocratic. The peril of the purely bookish man is that of becoming a prig. The pre-conceived opinion of what a boy ought to be sometimes prevents the discovery of what he really is. Among some there is a tendency to magnify the unusual boy at the expense of the normal boy. Such librarians would confer a benefit if they would discover what has become of the prodigies of our boyhood.

It is sometimes forgotten that boys must be led into better reading, not forcibly transplanted. There are steps and stages in this journey as in every other. A taste for good reading is something to be cultivated, not forced. A healthy boy has about the same appetite for observing the ready-made opinions of his superiors that he has for donning the made-over garments of his ancestors. Many librarians understand the boy as well as the book. The combination is fruitful, and divorce here has its own penalty as well as elsewhere. If the American boy (as in many places he is) can be made to feel that the librarian as well as the library are for his benefit, a double good will result.

Cordially,
EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.

Arlington, Mass.,
May 29, 1913.

In reply to the question proposed to me by your Association, "Is the public library helping the boy to become a useful man?" I reply emphatically in the affirmative. Of course, the degree of helpfulness must depend largely upon the library, and still more upon the character of the boy. To one of low tastes, with no ambition beyond the hour's indulgence, the finest library will have little meaning; but to one having a thirst for knowledge, and aspirations for self-improvement, access to any fairly well chosen collection of books cannot but prove of inestimable service in stimulating and developing his nobler qualities. My own early experience convinces me of this. In my recollections of a backwoods boyhood ("My Own Story," pages 44-46) I have told something of my indebtedness of a small subscription library, in which were found the works of a few great writers, among those Byron, Shakespeare, Plutarch, Cooper, and Scott, and a History of England, which was the first book I turned to after reading "Ivanhoe." The world was transformed for me by the poets and romancers that smiled on me from those obscure shelves. I repeat here what

I once wrote of that golden opportunity of my boyhood. The town has a vastly more attractive and comprehensive library today; but the value of such an institution depends, after all, upon what we ourselves bring to it. The few books that nourish vitally the eager mind are better than richly furnished alcoves amid which we browse languidly and loiter with indifference. This is true alike of the boy and the man.

JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE.

Toledo, Ohio,
May 14, 1913.

You ask, "Is the public library a factor in the recent development of a public conscience?"

I suppose that by the term public conscience you mean that undoubted quickening of the public sense, shall we say public decency?—which America has felt in the last ten years, though as yet it has undertaken no fundamental reforms, and is too apt to degenerate into a mere hue and cry after some individual whom it would make a scape-goat for the sins of the people.

Now, in the development of this feeling, or of this public conscience, it is doubtful whether the public library has been much of a factor. It depends altogether upon the librarian. There are a few instances, no doubt, in which the public library has had this effect, and there are many librarians in the country who, as wise and intelligent men like yourself, are interested in vital subjects, and therefore able to interest others in them. By a judicious exposure of books these subjects are made so inviting and so attractive that the patrons of the library are led on and on in an ever widening exploration of the subject. The library does offer to any one who wishes to make inquiry the opportunity of gratifying his desires, and in this way it no doubt exercises a considerable influence. There is a profound and tremendous influence, silent and indirect, from its mere existence, its mere presence, which must do good in a city, just as in a home in which there are many books, even though they were never read, there is the atmosphere of culture. The librarian, however, should be a sort of teacher, helping the public mind, assisting in the development of the public conscience, for I fear that the public, if left to themselves, would rather read the six best sellers, and in the realm of general ideas engage, to recall a phrase of Henry James "in the exercise of skipping."

Yours sincerely,
BRAND WHITLOCK.

TWO EAST NINETY-FIRST STREET
NEW YORK

Dear Mr President.

You ask. "What do
you consider the most valuable
accomplishment of the public
library movement in the
past decade" —

Answer —

The spread of the truth
that the Public Library, free
to all the People, gives

Nothing for Nothing: that
the Reader must himself climb
the ladder & in climbing
gain knowledge how to
live this life well

Wendell Carnegie

New York April 7th 1913.